

Impeachment test gains favor in U.S.

By William Theis
Chief Examiner Washington Bureau

American grassroots leaders generally now favor the impeachment process as the right way to determine President Nixon's Watergate guilt or innocence and are disdainful of the resignation alternative that he also rejects.

All but a very few of the opinion makers contacted in a national Hearst Newspapers survey predicted that inflation and the economy will top Watergate as an issue in this year's elections.

That feeling was reflected from the nation's governors, convening today in Seattle for their annual conference, down to local leaders of both parties and representative business and labor spokesmen.

Most of those interviewed want the impeachment inquiry to go ahead full throttle. Some view the investigation now in the House Judiciary Committee as a "cleansing" for the body politic as well as a judgment of the President. And they regard a pressured resignation as a bad precedent for the office and the country.

This "political pulse" survey provided mixed opinion on how badly Republican candidates would be hurt by Watergate. Texas Republicans reported a "demoralizing" setback in their drive to build a two-party system there and were perhaps hardest hit by the shock of the Watergate transcripts.

The reports came from Hearst newspapers in Boston, Baltimore, Albany, Seattle, San Antonio, San Francisco and Los Angeles, and from special correspondents in Detroit and Atlanta. They follow:

● *In Baltimore . . .*

By David Ahern

BALTIMORE — Leaders in Maryland, which made scandal a household word in 1973, want impeachment proceedings against President Nixon to be pushed ahead full throttle.

They don't think the President should resign and they are not sure what effects Watergate will have on the 1974 election races in the area.

Democratic Gov. Marvin Mandel said he favors impeachment.

State Republican party head, State Sen. Edward P. Thomas Jr., said he hoped the constitutional process would get the facts out as soon as possible and the government could "get on with the business of running the country."

● In Boston . . .

By Earl Marchand

BOSTON — Opinion leaders in the New England area

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generally support the impeachment process rather than President Nixon's resignation as a catharsis for the Watergate scandal.

"The impeachment process cleanses," is the way Vermont Gov. Thomas P. Salmon, a Democrat, put it.

Massachusetts Gov. Francis W. Sargent agrees and urged that the "process run forward as rapidly as possible." Sargent is a Republican running for re-election.

In Gov. Sargent's office in Boston there is a feeling that incumbents — both Democrats and Republicans — will be hurt by the mess, but worst hurt may be the Republicans.

New Hampshire politicians feel that the Watergate problem will have little effect on Republican candidates.

But the top issue? "It's the pocketbook issue — the price of baloney and hot dogs and fuel oil," said the spokesman. "Watergate places a distant second."

● In Seattle . . .

By Mike Layton and Wayne Jacobi

SEATTLE — Pacific Northwest political leaders and strategists — Republican and Democrat — mostly agree that proceeding with the impeachment process is preferable to having President Nixon resign.

Almost to a person they are convinced that the "gut" issues of inflation and the economy will be more decisive in elections this fall than Watergate. And they detect an anti-incumbent mood among the voters.

"Resignation would be interpreted by many as an admission of guilt," said Montana Gov. Thomas L. Judge, a Democrat.

Alaska Gov. William Egan, also a Democrat, shared Judge's sentiments.

"I feel the impeachment process should continue," said Egan. "If the President is impeached by the House, then it should be evaluated at that time whether the nation should endure the spectacle of a trial."

Gov. Dan Evans of Washington, a Republican and chairman of the National Governors Conference meeting

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here, also favors letting the impeachment process run and opposes a presidential resignation.

But Evans' Republican colleague across the Columbia River, Oregon Gov. Tom McCall, hasn't changed his mind since March when he became the nation's first governor to call for the President's resignation.

"The President shouldn't put us through the agony of impeachment and trial," McCall said. "If he is not going to open up, he should resign."

Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus, a Democrat, agreed with McCall.

● In San Antonio . . .

By Sharon Watkins

SAN ANTONIO — Texas Republicans just gaining a foothold after years of efforts to build a two-party state,

are plainly discouraged in the wake of the Watergate transcripts.

In a state where two housewives spent their own money for newspaper ads and collected 12,000 pro-Nixon "coupons" in a scrapbook for the President, congressmen report they still receive about as much pro-Nixon as anti-Nixon mail.

But for Republican workers and officeholders who must translate public sentiment into votes there is tacit agreement that Watergate has weakened the state party and slowed its hard-won momentum.

Mrs. Nancy Palm, Republican chairman for Houston's Harris County, says the transcripts were "demoralizing and devastating to the morale of the average Republican worker."

Texas Democratic congressmen make strong statements about the President's handling of Watergate, but there is almost total unanimity against demanding the President's resignation.

● *In San Francisco . . .*

By Sydney Kossen

SAN FRANCISCO — Most opinion molders in this area, including editorials in the San Francisco Examiner, favor the impeachment route in deciding President Nixon's fate. But Republican candidates wish the impeachment process could be speeded up — reflecting concern about the political impact of Watergate dragout.

There is nothing to indicate that White House efforts to knock down resignation talk is responsible for support of the impeachment alternative.

Gov. Reagan, prospective '76 GOP presidential candidate, has consistently defended Nixon on the principle that one must be presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

Reagan opposes Nixon's resignation because "it will leave everything unresolved."

Conservative State Sen. John L. Harmer, running for the Republican nomination for lieutenant governor in the Tuesday primary, says: "I've encountered a great deal of cynicism on the part of the public over Watergate. It is not so much anti-Republican as anti-incumbent."

● *In Los Angeles . . .*

By Jack Brown

LOS ANGELES — Political leaders in Southern California generally feel the impeachment process should be carried out to determine President Nixon's role in the Watergate affair and establish "once and for all" his guilt or innocence.

Whether Democratic or Republican they express belief the President should not resign.

But they split on partisan lines in declaring whether Watergate will be a major issue in congressional elections, compared with such other pocketbook problems as inflation and unemployment.

Typical opinions came from Charles T. Manatt, Southern California Democratic chairman and Richard E. Gulbranson, Republican chairman for Los Angeles County.

Both opposed the idea that Nixon should resign.

Manatt, an attorney, said the "fairness doctrine" should allow the President his day in court.

Gulbranson said Watergate would have little effect on political campaigns, but Manatt felt the affair would give the Democrats 40 to 50 more seats in the Congress.

● *In Albany . . .*

By Vic Ostrowidzki

ALBANY (N.Y.) — The Watergate fallout isn't expected to poison New York's political atmosphere this fall.

If Watergate does play a role, it will probably have minimal effect on statewide candidates.

But Republicans running in local races may be hit harder by Watergate, especially if their Democratic opponents try to lump Watergate with pocketbook issues in their campaign attacks.

Republican and Democratic politicians now believe that President Nixon should stick it out and go through the impeachment process.

"If he's guilty we'll get rid of him. If he's innocent, he'll be able to govern," Albany County Republican chairman Joseph Frangella said in an interview.

● *In Detroit . . .*

By Robert L. Pisor

DETROIT — "Watergate did us in" declared Michigan GOP Chairman William McLaughlin after the Democrats' stunning upset victory in Vice President Ford's old Grand

Rapids district.

In the troubled Republican spring of 1974, the GOP went zero for three in special elections in the Great Lakes area. Many Democrats have begun to envision a November sweep similar to the landslide of 1964.

Post-election surveys by Market Opinion Research in Michigan's 5th and 8th districts indicated voters abandoned their traditional Republican voting habits for a single reason: to send a message of disapproval to Washington.

Nevertheless, demands for Mr. Nixon's resignation are muted in the Great Lakes states, and political leaders — both Democrat and Republican — seem prepared to accept the impeachment process now under way in Washington.

● *In Atlanta . . .*

By Sam Hopkins

ATLANTA — A survey in the Southeast indicates most Southerners are still reluctant to lash out publicly at President Nixon over the Watergate scandals even since he released his tape transcripts to the House Judiciary Committee.

In fact, the transcripts seem to have made people more guarded with a silent wait-and-see mood prevailing.

Most people see inflation as a bigger issue in elections this year than Watergate.